Journal of Human Rights Practice, 2019, 1–19
doi: 10.1093/jhuman/huz029
Article

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Communicating Cosmopolitanism During Times of Crisis: UNHCR and the World Refugee Day Campaign in the UK and Bulgaria

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Abstract

How can a cosmopolitan message about refugees be communicated in an international political context characterized by growing hostility to outsiders at the national level? This article provides a detailed analysis of a specific World Refugee Day campaign based on extensive access to internal data from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and interviews with key informants alongside case studies of the campaign in two European countries: the United Kingdom (UK) and Bulgaria. While internal UNHCR assessment suggested successful meeting of pre-set targets, a series of issues around the implementation of message framing and the potential for this to generate action are identified. The article applies ideas about the communication of distant suffering to explore how World Refugee Day campaigns operate as interventions into global public discourse. The analysis of the campaign framing finds that it maximized space for solidaristic understanding of the refugee issue and reflexivity. However, the article argues that the communication of these ideas is impacted by the practical and organizational challenges (and opportunities) of developing a professional communication strategy in the context of a rapidly changing media and political environment.

Keywords: campaigning; framing; media; refugees; UNHCR

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Introduction

> *UNHCR is navigating extraordinarily difficult waters. The combination of multiple conflicts and resulting mass displacement, fresh challenges to asylum, the funding gap between humanitarian needs and resources, and growing xenophobia is very dangerous.*
>
> —Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees[1]

At a time when record numbers of people are seen fleeing their homes due to persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations—figures from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) suggest that the global refugee population at the end of 2018 was 25.9 million,[2] representing the highest level ever recorded (UNHCR 2018)—the challenge for the organization, to promote solutions (Article 8, Statute of the Office of the UNHCR), and communicate effectively about this human catastrophe, is enormous. The UNHCR seeks to provide reliable information and neutral reporting about policies and state responses, while raising awareness and improving understanding about the situations faced by refugees.

It is this latter communication goal that this article explores. Through its annual World Refugee Day campaigns, the UNHCR has increasingly sought to highlight the experience of refugees and encourage and build empathy. It is no surprise that the UNHCR should perceive itself as contributing in this way. It defines its role as a 'global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people' (UNHCR 2016a). These cosmopolitan ideals are foundational to justifications of its continued existence. However, they sit in stark opposition to the political climate in much of the developed world, characterized by nationalist and populist rhetoric and tensions between border security, anti-immigrationism and humanitarianism. In a practical and pragmatic sense, they are further constrained by scarce resources (Garnier et al. 2018), and the sensitivities of states who may see the UNHCR's public engagement campaigns as potentially undermining or even ideologically driven 'propaganda' (Alleyne 2003).

The rest of the article examines the development of World Refugee Day, analyses campaign strategy, and assesses conceptualizations of the UNHCR's effectiveness and impact in relation to its communications. Thus, the article's contribution is threefold. First, it provides a detailed analysis of a specific World Refugee Day campaign based on extensive access to internal UNHCR data and interviews with key informants. Second, it applies ideas about the communication of distant suffering to explore how World Refugee Day campaigns operate as interventions into global public discourse. Third, it considers the practical and organizational challenges of developing a professional communication strategy in the context of a rapidly changing media and political environment. The article uses the concept of cosmopolitanism to assist with the first two of these: identifying and pinpointing the orientation and underlying philosophy of the World Refugee Day campaign, and engaging with scholarly literature on the communication of human rights.

1 Quoted in UNHCR UK: The High Commissioner, http://www.unhcr.org/uk/the-high-commissioner.html (referenced 10 April 2018).

2 This figure includes the 20.4 million refugees under the UNHCR's mandate and the 5.5 million Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA (UN Agency for Palestine refugees) (UNHCR 2018).

It focuses on the campaign in a single year—the 2012 Dilemmas campaign—and examines the relationship between UNHCR's central communications team and two European contexts: the United Kingdom (UK) and Bulgaria. In that year the UK—a country with a population at the time of 63.7 million people—received 28,260 asylum applications, a seven per cent increase on the previous year. Bulgaria (total population in 2012, 7.3 million) processed 1,385 applications, 56 per cent more than in 2011 (European Asylum Support Office 2013). The article draws on evidence generated through archival research, semi-structured face-to-face interviews and a focus group conducted by the author.[3] The 2012 Dilemmas campaign was selected because it was the first campaign where the UNHCR adopted a more coordinated approach, recognizing the importance of social media, and drawing on professional strategic communications methods, including impact analysis. This allows for an evaluation of such shifts in the context of a rapidly increasing refugee population (UNHCR 2018) and a hostile media and political environment in Europe (Balch and Balabanova 2016; Berry et al. 2016; Gerard and Pickering 2013; Moore 2012).

The challenge: distant suffering and cosmopolitanism during times of 'crisis'

As a high-profile humanitarian organization, the UNHCR has to navigate the opportunities and challenges presented by the emergence of new media and social networking platforms. It also has to consider how to 'frame' its message in the context of the wider political and media discourse. Entman (1993) conceptualized framing as the selection and emphasis, inclusion and exclusion of information when discussing an issue, directing the way 'particular definitions and interpretations of political issues' are presented and promoted (Shah et al. 2002). In this instance, the UNHCR's framing needed to serve the general aim: 'to give a wider audience a better understanding of what it means to be a refugee' in the words of the 2005–2015 UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres (cited in Sandvik 2010: 289).

This task has become all the more difficult amid the so-called migrant crisis which has illuminated a shortfall in hospitality among receiving states (Balch 2016). Between 2012 and 2018 the refugee population under UNHCR's mandate nearly doubled—from 10.5 to 20.4 million (UNHCR 2018: 13). This trend has led to sustained and unprecedented political scrutiny around the refugee system, its increased restrictiveness, and the wider 'securitization of migration' in Europe, North America and Australia (Andreas 2003; Buonfino 2004; Gerard and Pickering 2013; Huysmans 2000; Moore 2012). Political hostility has been accompanied by negative discourse around refugees in the media (Balabanova 2014; Berry et al. 2016; Buchanan et al. 2003; Cohen 2011; Lloyd 2003; McKay et al. 2011; Schuster 2011).

3 The interviews were with individuals directly involved in World Refugee Day campaigns at global and national levels, including UNHCR, UNHCR UK and UNHCR Bulgaria, Refugee Action, Migrants' Rights Network, British Red Cross, Asylum Link Merseyside, City Hearts, and Student Action for Refugees (STAR). The focus group included 21 individuals working in the general field of asylum and refugee issues in the UK—academics (6), NGOs (10), representatives of the Home Office (1), Liverpool City Council (2), UNHCR (2).

The UNHCR's aim to communicate and foster empathy regarding the plight of refugees faces discriminatory media discourses separating 'us' from 'them' (Wodak 2008), using stereotypes (Cisneros 2008) and stigmatizing migrant groups (Philo et al. 2013). Research has demonstrated that media coverage tends to simplify policy issues (Balch and Balabanova 2011) and refugees become caught up in hostility and negativity (Alia and Bull 2005; Leiken 2005) with mainstream media providing a platform and catalyst for nationalist, populist and far right ideologies (Ellinas 2010). Coverage has been found to be inaccurate, provocative, and partial, with confused terminology and obsession with exaggerated numbers, lack of contextualization, reliance on a narrow range of sources and a paucity of refugee voices (Buchanan et al. 2003; Philo et al. 2013). How should the UNHCR communicate about refugees in this context when, as Ignatieff (1998: 11–12) points out, 'images of human suffering do not assert their own meaning; they can only instantiate a moral claim if those who watch understand themselves to be potentially under obligation to those they see'?

One potential answer lies in the availability of new forms of communication outside the mainstream media. The development of cosmopolitan[4] sensibilities have always tended to be associated with new technologies of communication (Balabanova 2014). Indeed, the first emergence of the 'mass media' was seen by many as leading towards the creation of a 'global village' (McLuhan 1964), inspiring a mutual sense of belonging that goes beyond the national (Skrbis and Woodward 2013) invoking 'a moral sensibility or concern for remote strangers from different continents, cultures and societies' (Hoijer 2004: 514). The arrival of a new media environment provides an intriguing potential for cross-national communication, grass-roots activism and polymedia 'events' to (re)connect the world (Madianou 2013), bringing identification and a sense of responsibility for distant others (e.g. Silverstone 2007), by normalizing difference (Nava 2007: 13), creating a global 'civil society' (Kaldor 2003), through journalists embedding cosmopolitanism within professional values (e.g. Dahlgren 2013), or by creating a global public sphere (Lull 2007).

Despite these hopes, communitarian sentiments dominate: the national remains the way most media make sense of the world, meaning global humanitarian commitments are hard to sustain (Kyriakidou 2009). 'Compassion fatigue' (Moeller 1999) and 'distantiation from compassion' (Hoijer 2004) are phrases often used to describe the moral apathy of Western audiences who are 'becoming so used to the spectacle of dreadful events, misery and suffering that we stop noticing them ... We are bored', concluding instead that 'this is just the way things are and nothing can be done that will make a difference' (Tester 2001: 13).

A second possibility is raised by Chouliaraki, who explores how framing can encourage solidarity (2006, 2008). She draws the distinction between cosmopolitan ('democratization of responsibility') and communitarian ('celebration of communitarianism') versions of global connectivity. In the case of the former, 'the spectator's concern for the misfortune of

4 There are many 'cosmopolitanisms' but one use of the term is to reflect on moral implications and questions of governance being provided by the processes of globalization (Brown and Held 2010). The concept has garnered interest across different disciplines, particularly media and communication studies (Ong 2009). These areas of study have been particularly interested in the opportunities as well as the limitations offered by the representations of distant suffering to encourage new moral sensibilities and reduce the distance between the audiences of humanitarian crisis that are usually Western and the victims who tend to be non-Western (Boltanski 1999; Chouliaraki 2006; Silverstone 2007).

the distant sufferer' is increased and a 'reflexive process by which the spectator comes to recognize such realities as a potential domain of his or her own action' is enabled (Chouliaraki 2008: 373). In contrast, in the case of communitarian forms of connectivity, responsibility and reflexivity are missing, and 'the feeling in common' is based on 'connectivity with fellow spectators' without an 'orientation toward the distant other' (ibid.). The lessons for an organization like the UNHCR are to talk about refugee issues in ways that can bridge the gap between communitarianism and cosmopolitanism. In her research on TV news Chouliaraki identifies an 'emergency' frame that avoids the typical problems around distance and apathy, opening up the space for a solidaristic and cosmopolitan ethic that is action-oriented (ibid: 387). This can help create what Silverstone (2007: 47) calls 'proper distance'— 'the degree of proximity required . . . to create and sustain a sense of the other sufficient not just for reciprocity but for a duty of care, obligation and responsibility, as well as understanding'. This is contrasted with the danger of an 'ecstatic' frame where a sense of empathy is so strong that the distance between the sufferer and the spectator is almost collapsed. This foregrounds identification but reduces the necessary reflexivity essential if the intention is to encourage engagement and action (Chouliaraki 2008: 378–80)

How has the UNHCR and its small team of communications professionals (three staff in 2012) deployed and framed World Refugee Day in relation to these dilemmas, opportunities and risks? How are impact and audience conceptualized and how is effectiveness assessed? The rest of this article explores these questions in light of the development of World Refugee Day and a particular year—the 2012 Dilemmas campaign.

World Refugee Day

The development of World Refugee Day offers a fascinating window into the evolution of the organization's attempts to resolve the problem of distance and to foster a solidaristic and cosmopolitan ethic that is action-oriented. Used as both 'a community-building effort, and as part of the organization's strategy to manage and re-territorialize the governance of displaced populations' (Sandvik 2010), World Refugee Day has become the key advocacy tool and the main focus of strategic communication for the UNHCR since 2001. The UNCHR has a longer history of multimedia awareness campaigns with World Refugee Year (1959–60) including more than 60 countries (Gatrell 2011), but World Refugee Day emerged from a smaller regional event—Africa Refugee Day, established in 1975 by resolution 398 adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The success of the Africa Refugee Day initiative combined with the approaching 50th anniversary of the 1951 Convention (Relating to the Status of Refugees) led, in 2000, to the UN General Assembly adopting an international refugee day coinciding with Africa Refugee Day.[5] According to the UNHCR (2016b) this is the day to 'commemorate the strength, courage and perseverance of millions of refugees'. Since its launch in 2001 World Refugee Day has become the UNHCR's highest visibility campaign.

Traditionally, a specific theme has been chosen as an organizing concept for each World Refugee Day—a consensual and globally pertinent topic behind which all can rally but which is generic enough to allow flexibility to interpret it in a culturally and geographically particular way. Themes have ranged from respect (2001), tolerance (2002), refugee youth

5 The day was established by UN General Assembly resolution 55/76 and had the agreement of the OAU.

(2003), repatriation (2004), courage (2005) to, more recently, hopes and dreams (2016), common humanity (2017), solidarity (2018) and #StepWithRefugees (2019). In its first ten years World Refugee Day acted as a global week-long festival consisting of activities such as photography exhibitions, film festivals, lectures, panel discussions, puppet shows, food bazaars, tree planting, fashion shows, concerts, sports competitions, quizzes, drawing and essay writing competitions, seminars, workshops, speeches, public awareness campaigns and poetry recitals. These events involved not only the UNHCR, but also international and national NGOs, politicians, international celebrities and local dignitaries, as well as '[t]he refugees themselves' (Sandvik 2010: 289).

The little research that has been done on World Refugee Day has focused on questions of representation, legitimacy and governance (Hedman 2009; Sandvik 2010; Hickerson and Dunsmore 2016). These studies have pointed out the significance of World Refugee Day for the UNHCR as the organization struggles to (re)define and defend its international humanitarian role and mandate at a 'critical conjuncture in world historical time' (Hedman 2009: 287) and the way World Refugee Day evidences 'the struggle [of the UNHCR] to navigate the tension between celebrating the ideal of global community and its own role in governing the increasingly strict spatial divisions between regions, nations and groups' (Sandvik 2010: 296). They also highlight how a day established by the UN to bring attention to the plight of refugees worldwide is represented by a national media (US) through a local lens focusing on the 'lives and futures of refugees in their US communities and on the social concerns of the larger community' (Hickerson and Dunsmore 2016: 436).

The 2012 Dilemmas campaign

The 2012 World Refugee Day campaign demonstrates a shift to a more strategic and coordinated approach. This can be traced to 2010 and an organizational rebranding exercise seeking to establish the UNHCR as the authority on forced displacement. It was decided that World Refugee Day would still have a central theme with some local flexibility, but there would be more guidance and coordination from Geneva, responding to perceived inconsistencies in previous campaigns. According to Leigh Foster (2013), Head of Events, Campaigns and Goodwill Ambassadors at the UNHCR, in previous campaigns:

> Offices in the field were not taught and instructed how to conduct themselves, how to talk to audiences, the headquarters chose a theme/idea for every office to work towards, but there was no consistency of the messages and the whole organization was very ad hoc, without a real organizational objective and coordination. Everybody determined what to do on a regional basis, without any thinking about what to achieve for the organization.

The new approach maintained local advocacy priorities (with advice from headquarters) but included a new requirement to talk about the issues consistently in all materials and outreach (traditional or digital media). This reflected the desire from the UNHCR, in response to perceived weaknesses of World Refugee Day, to speak with one voice to all its audiences and to take advantage of the new communications environment. The ambition was nothing less than the creation of a universal message—both visual and verbal—'to elevate the cause of refugees by putting it on the global media agenda, educating the public about who refugees are and why they need our help, thus increasing support for UNHCR's essential work' (UNHCR 2012a).

The World Refugee Day campaign in 2011 was the first using this approach with the '1' concept ('1 refugee without hope is too many') used by all of the UNHCR's 120 global offices on the local level, complemented by centrally coordinated benchmarking and analysis to establish effectiveness (UNHCR 2012c). The 2012 campaign further developed this approach with the 'dilemmas' concept designed 'to increase the public's understanding of why refugees need their help' (UNHCR 2012a). The media campaign involved a range of new techniques in a multilayer strategy directed at both global and local levels.

The key conceptual design behind the 2012 Dilemmas campaign was formulated as follows:

> To counter the negative stereotypes perpetuated by populist politicians, we have chosen to focus on the survival stage of the displacement cycle. When conflict breaks out, people are faced with life or death decisions that will impact them forever. Through the Dilemmas campaign, we compel audiences to contemplate those same decisions a refugee is forced to confront when he or she decides to flee—thereby asking our audiences to put themselves in a refugee's place. (UNHCR 2012b)

Thus, the campaign avoided using the figure of the 'ideal refugee', which has long been criticized (e.g. Rajaram 2002). It had three conceptual components: temporal (survival stage of the displacement cycle), cognitive (prompting audiences to make the same life-or-death decisions as a refugee), and affective (asking the audience to put themselves imaginatively in the shoes of a refugee). Together they were designed to build an empathetic lens with which to understand the refugee issue—a framing of the problem through the distinct horrors of refugee flight, leading the audience towards the compelling need for protection of individuals (UNHCR 2012a). This approach was developed internally by the UNHCR rather than being based on an evidence-based review of psychological factors leading to greater sympathy with others (such as intergroup contact theory (Allport 1954)).

This was a direct attempt to 'bridge the fathomless distance between the sufferer and the spectator' (Cohen 2001: 169). The central claim of the campaign was that no one chooses to become a refugee, which was communicated through the call to action: 'No one chooses to become a refugee. Go to www.takeaction.unhcr.org—because you do have a choice'. In addition, and in line with the changes from 2010, the role of the UNHCR was highlighted in all communication, in order 'to encourage people to feel compelled to act and support UNHCR's work' (UNHCR 2012b).

The more strategic overall approach meant the identification of different sets of targets. These were divided into internal targets, about engagement and consistent messaging across all UNHCR offices, and external targets, to raise awareness and understanding of refugees and increase recognition of the UNHCR (as an authority on forced displacement). Specific objectives included increases in: the number of views of the Special Envoy Angelina Jolie TV spot, the traffic to the campaign landing page by 20 per cent (from 2011 levels), the dwell time on the campaign landing page by 30 per cent, the replication of the call-to-action web page and use of digital materials, the audience size on social media platforms, the media coverage, the key message penetration and the coverage of the campaign concept (UNHCR 2012d).[6]

6 The media coverage, the key message penetration and the coverage of the campaign concept were measured through the number of news stories, and the key message and the key spokesperson pick up (UNHCR 2012d).

There were also a number of communication-specific goals (UNHCR 2012c) including: raising awareness of refugees and forced displacement issues, improving brand recognition through consistent communications—speaking with 'one voice', increasing the number of offices that get behind the campaign, increasing audiences and corresponding improvement in their engagement and loyalty, increasing digital campaign reach and the effectiveness of the user journey, and increasing social media impact and engagement.

At the level of implementation, the Dilemmas campaign was to operate on two levels—global and local. At the global level UNHCR involved the High Commissioner for Refugees, the Special Envoy, and the Goodwill Ambassadors and disseminated key facts and information such as the Global Trends Statistics Report. A global campaign launch and global distribution of campaign media materials (a toolkit) sought a consistent and coherent visual and verbal message. This was supported by a mix of global and local promotion, setting up of media and corporate partnerships and inclusion of celebrities.

An essential element was using the main Dilemmas concept to direct the audiences to a call to action through reference to the refugee journey and the web page (http://takeaction.unhcr.org) that went live in the beginning of June 2012. People were asked to download the UNHCR's new 'My Life as a Refugee' smartphone application (for iPhone and Android mobile phones), to answer a series of four web-based dilemma questions aimed at building empathy and understanding (for example, What would you do? Stay and risk your lives in the conflict? Or flee and risk kidnap, rape, torture or worse?), or to make a donation to the UNHCR (UNHCR 2012c).

With its use of new media, celebrities, and a mobile app, the UNHCR tried to gain maximum benefit from celebrity endorsement and exploit new opportunities for engagement. In 2012 this resulted in a strong focus on Angelina Jolie and extended use of Facebook, Twitter and the app. The Angelina Jolie TV spot was translated and subtitled by around 50 per cent more UNHCR offices (40 in total) compared to 2011. Local celebrity Public Service Announcements (PSAs) alongside this spot or instead of it were placed on TV stations, on public transport, at film festivals, in cinemas and other places around the world. InStream adverts on YouTube resulted in significantly more views than in 2011 (an increase of 40 per cent). In addition, the use of GoViral, a digital distribution of the Angelina Jolie PSA to blog sites, produced additional views and UNHCR achieved more than 50 per cent more global air time spots compared to 2011 (UNHCR 2012d).

PSAs were recorded by 13 additional Goodwill Ambassadors and supporters in 2012 and distributed by national and regional offices across a variety of platforms including: social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, Flickr), UNHCR's websites, TV channels and programmes, concerts and stadiums, cinemas, train stations, taxis, and public spaces and events. Visitors stayed on the Dilemmas campaign landing page a full minute longer in 2012 than in 2011, with dwell time increasing by 92 per cent. The overall increase in traffic to the English-language global site was 280 per cent more than in 2011. Seventeen of 49 formally linked and recognized UNHCR websites (35 per cent) replicated the Dilemmas campaign call-to-action page—this was done in 12 different languages. Another 17 UNHCR websites linked through to a global, regional or country version of the page. Some offices added their own locally relevant call to action (UNHCR 2012d).

By their own measures there was a successful exploitation of online resources—between 13 June (140,000 fans) and 31 July (172,000 fans)—the period the two bursts of ads ran for—the UNHCR picked up approximately 31,854 new fans on Facebook through a combination of quality content, paid-for ads, and sponsored stories. Importantly, the Facebook

post about the campaign was the most successful post (by number of 'likes') on this platform in UNHCR's history to date (UNHCR 2012d).

UNHCR's own analysis found that between 1 and 30 June 2012 there were 2,285 news stories about the campaign in total in mainstream media outlets around the world (UNHCR 2012d), considerably fewer than 2011. This aligns with other research that has typically found relatively low levels of coverage around World Refugee Day (Hickerson and Dunsmore 2016), but quantity needs to be balanced with the effective communication of content. In 2012 the phrases 'No one chooses to be a refugee' and 'Refugees don't have a choice' were echoed by hundreds of media outlets—there were over 700 news articles that used the phrase 'No one chooses to be a refugee'. This effect was not identified with the 2011 campaign phrase, thus suggesting greater messaging breakthrough in 2012.

An internal evaluation of the campaign included an online survey to get an assessment of impact from those directly involved in its execution. The survey covered both the strategic framing of content, and the use of new forms of media to engage with the audiences. All local and regional offices were encouraged to take part, and of those that responded,[7] 92 per cent reported that they had used the Dilemmas campaign materials in some capacity—implementing and incorporating elements of the centralized concept and message; 91.5 per cent reported that they were satisfied with the support provided by Geneva. The materials were not used in Georgia, Syria, Nairobi and Malaysia where the message of the 2012 Dilemmas campaign was felt to be unusable and/or inappropriate.

As a date-specific campaign, World Refugee Day inevitably competes with other, unforeseen, events. A content analysis of British national newspapers on the topics of refugees and asylum revealed that by far the most newsworthy issue for the print media over a three-week period from 10 June until 1 July 2012 was the fate of Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks (who was claiming asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy). The 2012 Olympic Games were also taking place in London. The UK case underlines why local knowledge and flexibility is crucial in adapting to the media environment to deliver the message: the Olympics was used by the UNHCR's UK office to focus on refugees' contributions to the Games (through a poster campaign on the London Underground, a festival on the South Bank, and so on) (UNHCR UK 2012). In the case of Bulgaria, the successful placement of stories about the campaign was found to be dependent upon providing direct contacts with journalists who were refugee-friendly (Cheshirkov 2013).

Public opinion surveys were conducted in 11 countries and in each country the aim was to establish baselines for attitudes towards refugees and help analyse audiences in order to further benchmark attitudes and hone communications strategies in each country (UNHCR 2012d). After the 2012 Dilemmas campaign, focus groups were held in three cities in Bulgaria by the national office, close to refugee centres. The UNHCR national office in Bulgaria reported that results suggested people generally understood issues around displacement and were sympathetic to the plight of refugees. However, when the focus shifted to the local and to refugees arriving in Bulgaria and the state support provided to them, people became defensive. This highlights how difficult is the fostering of local support and engagement. The Bulgaria UNHCR office felt that the local population were not well informed and lacked concern about refugee integration (Cheshirkov 2013). They reported that the 2012 Dilemmas campaign achieved a higher impact than in previous years where campaigns were more locally conceived. This appears to contradict the importance of local

7 The response rate for 2012 was 50, which represented just over a third of all (120) offices.

resonance in framing messages. The team in the Bulgaria office reported that in 2012 they welcomed the ability to draw on high quality centralized campaign resources as this relieved them of a significant organizational burden and, used selectively, allowed them to improve reach and coverage. They cited evidence of an increased number of interviews and interactions with the media including some successful reproduction of the campaign's framing of refugees (although this was anecdotal—there was no local collection of media data).

The next section explores this notion of framing more closely, examining how the work of Chouliaraki (2006, 2008), influential in the field of communications studies, can help assess the Dilemmas campaign and the challenges of communication of distant suffering; it then explores the connections between global and local, using the UK and Bulgaria as examples.

Bridging the gap: strategic framing

As a centralized communication exercise, the content and framing of the 2012 campaign had to resonate across different local contexts while maintaining its underlying purpose to open up or expand the space in public debates for a more solidaristic and cosmopolitan ethic towards refugees that is also action-oriented.

As mentioned earlier, the central concept of the campaign had three components: temporal (survival stage), cognitive (decision-making), and affective (to put audiences in the shoes of a refugee). This led to a framing with undeniably cosmopolitan overtones. An example is provided by the 'call-to-action' web page which stated:

> every minute eight people leave everything behind to escape war, persecution or terror. If conflict threatened your family, what would you do? Stay and risk your lives? Or try to flee, and risk kidnap rape or torture? For many refugees the choice is between the horrific or something worse.

The framing thus emphasized common human individual-level responses to conflict and emergency. This contrasted with the typical media threat-framing of the refugee issue by replacing the usual metaphors of flood and disease with universal concepts that join humanity such as home, family, children, and so on (Buchanan et al. 2003; Philo et al. 2013). By avoiding discussion of causes, the UNHCR was being politically cautious, but alongside the potential pitfalls of translating materials into different cultural contexts the Dilemmas concept risked prioritizing the individual at the expense of any consideration of deeper systemic problems and structural factors.

Poster designs also risked creating distance with generic images which were unfamiliar when compared to the people the audience would meet in their day-to-day life:

> considering the difficulty to find an idea that will speak to very different cultures, languages, countries, the concept for the global campaign had to resonate everywhere and be flexible enough to be adapted to suit the local context. The involvement and ownership of the idea and campaign at local level was deliberately sought out in order to make the idea work and be supported by the people. (Foster 2013)

These considerations required the content to be carefully curated to work in different national and international contexts (for example, presence or not of refugee camps, large/small numbers of refugees/asylum-seekers, developed civil society, active NGO sector, asylum law, refugee awareness, internally displaced people, and so on) and the production and

use of reinforcing materials that would arrive at the same message. In the words of Foster (2013):

> The challenge was to find a creative concept that is adaptable and flexible enough, so that at least the majority of the offices can use it and adapt it. We try to provide an umbrella under which offices can identify an element that will resonate and is relevant for their audience or their advocacy goals.

Considering the combination of 'compassion fatigue' (Moeller 1999), and the generally anti-asylum and anti-refugees discourses within national contexts in most Western countries (Philo et al. 2013; Balabanova and Balch 2010), this cosmopolitan framing of the message was deliberate. A campaign built around generic, inclusive ideas and cross-cutting issues, rather than appealing to single groups, was thought to have greater potential to attract wider audiences. How does this relate to the underlying strategic objective—to open up a more solidaristic, cosmopolitan space for discussion of refugee issues?

The framing of the Dilemmas campaign can be seen as an attempt to overcome the challenge of communication around distant suffering. The paradox is that while messages can inspire sympathy in audiences around the suffering of others—and even lead to identification with the sufferer—this does not automatically move the spectator to any form of meaningful action (Madianou 2013: 252). What the Dilemmas campaign aimed to achieve was the kind of 'emergency' framing outlined by Chouliaraki (2006) that can potentially overcome this paradox by shortening the distance between sufferer and spectator to such a point that the right space for reflexivity, solidarity and action is created.

In attaining this, a key challenge was to disseminate and cascade the main concept to the local level using the different communicative components of the campaign to strengthen the intended framing. Both in the UK and in Bulgaria, global centralized concepts and messages were combined with a local flavour. Still, there were varying responses, and this was something that emerged from the focus group. Questions were raised over the visual presentation (described by some as corporate and 'Hollywood-like') and whether it distracted from the main message. Several participants felt that this 'slick' aesthetic risked entrenching the problem of a lack of empathy and militated against direct action that would tackle real refugee problems. In the UK campaign the key message was that refugees are contributing members of society, not focusing on refugees as distant people and their experiences while far away. The motto 'different pasts, shared futures' was used, allowing a focus on the contributions that refugees make to the UK (Padoan 2013). This local variation still allowed for the central campaign messaging to be delivered to a wide audience, primarily through digital media, but it also meant a partial dilution of the core Dilemma framing.

In Central Europe, the global campaign website was faithfully replicated in the local languages along with specific local content. While the concept of 'what would you do?' was maintained, additional regional content was developed that worked in the Central European context. This meant that, in addition to the standard centralized (global) dilemmas, there was a regional set of dilemmas and then further national dilemmas—that is, two global, one regional and two country-level. In particular, the notion of human smuggling was included. A localized campaign page was run, localized Facebook posts, and localized videos (both for Bulgaria—country-level, and Central Europe—regional level) (Cheshirkov 2013).

The desire to maintain a particular framing has to be seen in light of the UNHCR's parallel target to improve internal branding. The UNHCR was keen for local and regional

offices to feel that they were part of something bigger, that they were being listened to, and that they were part of a conversation around campaigning (Foster 2013). This seemed to have worked well in the two countries examined here. Both in Bulgaria and in the UK interviewees reported feeling part of a real global consolidated effort (Cheshirkov 2013; Padoan 2013).

For the Bulgarian team the ability to provide feedback on the centralized campaign messages was seen as crucial and they felt encouraged and supported by the new campaign approach. This allowed for localization of some of the aspects of the central message that were felt to be not very suitable. For example, in Bulgaria a fundraising message would not be as successful as in the UK. As the Communication/Public Information Officer for the UNHCR Bulgaria at the time Boris Cheshirkov (2013) pointed out, the country lacks a fundraising culture, resources, and a fully developed sensitivity to refugee issues. In a context of hardship and deepening economic recession this became even more pronounced. In the UK, where World Refugee Day is part of a bigger event (Refugee Week) involving a range of organizations, including UNHCR UK, the British Red Cross, Oxfam, Refugee Action, Amnesty International, STAR (Student Action for Refugees), and others, the focus was on highlighting the contributions of refugees towards the Olympic Games taking place in London in the summer of 2012. Under the motto of the 'Unsung Heroes of 2012', the campaign materials featured the stories of four refugee Olympians: Luka, Téa, Cynthia and Kolbassia (UNHCR UK 2012).

While the key message, core content and desired framing was designed to create 'proper distance' (Silverstone 2007) and to maximize the potential for opening up a solidaristic space for action, in order to explore their effects we need to consider the way in which those ideas were delivered through multiple media.

Bridging the gap: (re)connecting the world

As a polymedia event, World Refugee Day engaged with multiple communication methods and techniques, including use of celebrities, social/digital media and the mobile app. How did these help to overcome the challenge for the UNHCR of bridging distance between spectator and sufferer? This section considers online tools and the role of global media celebrities in the 2012 World Refugee Day campaign.

An emphasis on online campaigning was strategic—seen as a way to reach audiences that otherwise might not have been exposed to the UNHCR's message. In particular, it made it possible to speak to a younger demographic. Considering the limited human and financial resources of the Strategic Communications Team of the UNHCR, online tools were also seen as cost-effective. It was hoped that the interactive component could act to strengthen the 'emergency' frame by encouraging reflexivity. The campaign was asking people to do something: reposition their perspective and put themselves imaginatively in someone else's shoes. The social media dimension was complementary, prompting audiences to 'act' (to 'like', to follow, to forward, to choose an option, and so on) rather than merely watch and/or read.

The obvious risk here is of the technologization of action—'clicktivism'—where action is reduced to the mere clicking of a mouse (Chouliaraki 2010: 117) or tapping a screen. This problem was recognized by one of the interviewees, Laura Padoan, the External Relations Officer at UNHCR UK (2013), who argued that a digital campaign could never

completely substitute for direct engagement with the public and the need for traditional printed materials.

While the availability of these new tools clearly affected campaign thinking, there was also anecdotal evidence that the use of digital media resulted in a significant shift in the actual observance of World Refugee Day. As several interviewees explained, the focus switched from organizing one big event in a particular country to where to place the PSAs/TV spot using not only TV, but other places such as cinemas, public spaces and so on, leading to more exposure of the campaign messages (Foster 2013; Cheshirkov 2013).

The most positive outcome for the UNHCR in terms of its impact on social media would be when someone is moved from 'dislike' to 'like', or from passive to active engagement. However, whether the social media are capable of changing people's perceptions remains as questionable as whether the traditional media are. It still might be the case that the digital campaigns speak to the already converted, to those who are already convinced before they get exposed to the campaign's message. For those with a strong antipathy towards refugees, a shift in perceptions to the other end of the spectrum is unlikely. An incremental shift from one position to another resulting in a more substantial change towards action over time is more realistic. Another issue raised by interviewees was the additional burden of social media activity for staff, considering that ever-larger numbers of them will inevitably be expected to get involved in social media campaigning in the future (Padoan 2013; Cheshirkov 2013).

The strategy to shift audiences from passive to active engagement, and the use of new technology to buttress the 'emergency' frame, was partly dependent on the 'My life as a refugee' app. This was a role-play game encouraging users to put themselves in the shoes of a refugee and imaginatively go through the same emotions that a person forced to flee would experience. The use of interactivity in the World Refugee Day campaigns was new and potentially very effective for the UNHCR in demonstrating engagement in numerical terms. The mobile app was directed mainly towards high-income countries—both in terms of the language (English) and the technology (smartphones). It was an attempt to tell a story to a different audience: those who may prefer to play a game than to read a lengthy article. In terms of the number of downloads, reviews and media attention the assessment of the app was positive (UNHCR 2012c). However, in the context of the overall campaign the investment (100,000 US dollars) was significant, alongside the time and thought needed to put together the concept, background research, and creation of story lines. There were also mixed responses even in the markets with higher levels of downloads such as the UK, where it was heavily promoted by STAR. It was accused of trivializing, while also praised for reaching new audiences (UNHCR UK 2012). A significant problem identified by interviewees was the lack of a clear target market for the app (such as age group), and the tension between something designed to be educational and something designed to be entertaining. The fact that the app was released late in the campaign cycle and was only available in English further limited its success.

The use of social media related closely to the goal of extending reach. The UNHCR splits its potential external audiences into core (for example, fellow support workers and activists), persuadables (like-minded, socially-minded), and others (everyone else). The ambitions in 2012 mainly related to the persuadables, using the core audience to engage this group, acting as ambassadors to reach out through their networks. The campaign therefore started with those already involved with the UNHCR and partner agencies before expanding outwards.

Interestingly, the UNHCR's Strategic Communications Team found that the concept behind the 2012 Dilemmas campaign worked better externally than internally, and that outside audiences related to it more than the internal ones such as the UNHCR offices across the globe. In the words of Foster (2013):

> The UNHCR offices did not identify with the posters that were seen as unreal and artificial creations. The posters provoked amazing public reaction and captured public imagination. People responded to the call 'what would you do?'. But the concept of choosing was not understood by UNHCR's offices in some parts of the world.

The final communication method to consider is the use of celebrities, which has become a mainstay, particularly through the role of the Special Envoy and Goodwill Ambassadors. In addition to this, more generally there is a growing role for dissemination on social media through persons with high profiles. The UNHCR is not alone in using influential figures to mediate and get their messages across and to reach a wider audience than the organizations themselves can reach and in a potentially more effective way (Dittrich 2009; Valley 2009).

Celebrities can help 'set and frame an agenda in the public consciousness and then promote that agenda to global leaders in the hope that the issue will be addressed' (Cooper and Turcotte 2012: 201). Angelina Jolie has become synonymous with the work of the UNHCR and is seen as a great asset considering the actress's sustained high profile in the media (BBC News 2013; UNHCR no date). However, there are risks to using celebrities. In Jolie's case, there is a risk the message gets lost due to public interest in her personal life, or her own 'emotional investment in the problem' (Jelaca 2014). Chouliaraki (2012) compared Jolie to Audrey Hepburn, a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador from 1989 until her death in 1993, highlighting how the latter aimed to redirect attention to those in need of help, downplaying her own emotional state whereas Jolie's 'humanitarian persona' focuses on the celebrity herself as the primary carrier of emotion, rather than the survivor. Other risks include oversimplification when celebrities are tasked with explaining the key issues at stake. Nuance can be lost with unrepresentative individuals painting things in 'black and white' (Dieter and Kumar 2008: 260) while other voices (for example, from the global South or anti-globalization voices from the North) are drowned out (Valley 2009).

The Dilemmas campaign highlighted one more risk: that carefully prepared and constructed 'set-piece' material produced with celebrities can go unnoticed. Increased dissemination of Jolie's PSA was among the campaign targets. The results were mixed, as in some countries the PSA was not aired at all. The case studies of the UK and Bulgaria showed differing results. In the UK, according to the UNHCR UK office, it proved difficult to get local celebrities involved (Padoan 2013). The Angelina Jolie PSA was not placed on any TV channels, mainstream or smaller ones. The response of interviewees was that it needed a greater emphasis on 'call to action'. In a context of different television requirements for educational material and for fundraising material, the PSA appeared to fall somewhere between the two. Even the best supporter of World Refugee Day in the UK—The Community Channel—did not run the PSA, preferring to use shorter YouTube videos that were put together in a programme shown during Refugee Week. By contrast, for the Bulgaria UNHCR team, getting the PSA on national television was not a problem. It was successfully placed on one of the national channels, bTV. Several cable TV stations also screened it on an ad hoc basis and it was used to launch the 2012 Dilemmas campaign in the country (UNHCR Bulgaria 2012; Cheshirkov 2013).

Conclusions

Analysis of World Refugee Day offers a valuable insight into the balancing act faced by the UNHCR in the context of a precarious international system for refugee protection. The organization enjoys considerable support and there was little evidence of resistance to the assumption that World Refugee Day is the right way for the UNHCR to promote better protection for refugees.

The size and resources of the Strategic Communications Team mean that World Refugee Day necessarily sits within a much broader set of priorities. This might explain why the UNHCR has not undertaken more ambitious long-term research into the attitudinal impact of its campaigns, research which would require significant financial commitment. The campaign also highlights the real limits of the UNHCR's ability to achieve its ambition to widen understanding of 'what it means to be a refugee'. The evidence here is that World Refugee Day has worked primarily as a rallying call for its core audience, one already sympathetic to the cause of refugees. There is a question, then, about the extent to which World Refugee Day is achieving attitudinal change, or addressing barriers to improved refugee protection, which may be located at the level of states rather than in the court of public opinion.

In professional terms, the 2012 Dilemmas campaign was recognized by the EACA (European Association of Communication Agencies) Care Awards which 'aim to highlight the advertising industry's specific contribution to society by selecting and celebrating the most successfully creative social marketing campaigns' (http://www.act-responsible.org/ACT/EACAwinner13/eaca_winners13.htm). It came second among the campaigns from Government Bodies and Related Organizations, behind the European Commission's 'Quit Smoking with Barça' campaign. Its key novelty was the introduction of a professional communications strategy. This has the added value of generating a wealth of evidence around impact, and the internal assessment found that campaign goals were achieved (UNHCR 2012d).

The evidence from Bulgaria and the UK suggested that a centralized concept or frame can work, with some variation. The availability of more coordinated, centralized resources was less relevant for the UK, where the week-long schedule of activities has developed its own unique character. For Bulgaria, according to Cheshirkov (2013), the new approach was 'liberating', providing a 'safety net' for national offices with limited resources, shrinking budget and modest staff numbers. In this context, a centralized campaign provided a pre-vetted set of statements and materials that supported UNHCR objectives and were well-researched, high quality and clearly branded.

The conceptual design used by the campaign created a clearly cosmopolitan framing, emphasizing how we all, as individuals, would be challenged by the dilemmas facing those who become refugees. Although this approach is in line with scholarly thinking about how to close the gap between spectator and sufferer, roughly mapping on to Chouliaraki's (2006, 2008) 'emergency' framing, it is exceedingly difficult to ascertain whether it did indeed create the 'proper distance'. It could be argued that the inclusion of a level of responsiveness to local issues or fears around refugees reinserts the communitarian logic—a defensive cosmopolitanism rather than truly carving out more space for solidaristic thinking in public debates about refugees.

A key issue relates to the use of metrics which did not measure change in attitudes. Quantitative indicators like dwell times on the websites, number of clicks, shares, and so on cannot serve as evidence of positive engagement or change in the underlying beliefs of audiences. A deeper understanding of the impact of World Refugee Day needs to measure

changes in perceptions and attitudes which are unlikely to take place overnight—shifts may well be subtle and nuanced. The previously mentioned public opinion surveys on the Dilemmas campaign are valuable, but they only offer a snapshot of current perceptions and attitudes. The ability to carry out similar surveys over a longer period thus recording changes in perceptions and attitudes is potentially very valuable. In light of its position and standing, the UNHCR is ideally placed to grasp this opportunity.

Considering the ongoing debates surrounding polymedia campaigning, the involvement of celebrities in different campaigns, and the growing role of social media, World Refugee Day offers a fascinating window into the audience effects of celebrity endorsement, social media and mobile phone apps. In this case, the campaign combined these communication tools reasonably well in theory, with the app helping to personalize and individualize the message about dilemmas. However, it had limited reach because of language and technology uptake, and, as with the earlier point about the UNHCR's ultimate ambitions, it worked best with those already persuaded of the arguments about the situation for refugees. In terms of future evaluations of World Refugee Day campaigns, other aspects that could have been considered in a larger research project might include a more sophisticated content analysis of media coverage, longer-term evaluation of public responses to each successive campaign and attitudinal/opinion-related studies, a larger number of case studies, and comparative analysis of other human rights 'days'.

Funding

This work was supported by a Knowledge Exchange Grant awarded by the University of Liverpool.

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